Difficult Objections and Their Refutation

1. ***"If the operations of the Father and Son were truly one and the same it would follow from the Son becoming man that the Father likewise became man, but this is the heresy of Patripassianism, therefore it follows that the operations of the Father and Son are not truly one and the same."***

We answer by denying the major premise, namely, that if the operations of the Father and the Son were truly one, then, due to the Son becoming man, the Father likewise would have become man. For "becoming" more properly signifies a change or effect as opposed to an operation. Hence, when one says, "The wood is becoming hot," they are not signifying an operation on the part of the wood but rather a change or effect taking place in the wood due to the operation of something else — a man rubbing two sticks together, perhaps. Thus, the statement "The Son became man" is intended to signify a change rather than an operation by the Son. However, it must be stated that the change signified is, in this case, not on the part of the Son, for the Son is, in Himself, utterly immutable. Rather, we intend to signify a change on the part of the humanity the Son took on. Just as when we say a father has become shorter than his son, despite the father remaining the same stature, it is still said he became shorter because his son is the one who changed in stature and grew to be taller than him. Thus, the statement "The Son became man" is intended to signify an effect that took place — namely, the human nature being created and united to the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity. The effect is accepted by all to be achieved by the power of God, which we confess is common to both the Father and the Son. Therefore, it follows that the Father and the Son are equally responsible, not for becoming man, but rather specifically for Christ becoming man.

2. ***"If the operations of the Father and Son were truly one and the same it would follow from the Father begetting a Son that the Son would likewise beget a Son, but the Son does not beget a Son, therefore it follows that the operations of the Father and Son are not truly one and the same."***

We answer by denying the major premise, namely, that if the operations of the Father and the Son were truly one and the same, it would follow from the Father begetting that the Son would likewise beget. For the act of begetting can be considered in two ways: in itself, and as the foundation for the relations between the Father and the Son. In itself, the act of begetting is taught by the Fathers and Saints to be the act of intellection, of which we know there is only a single, common act of the intellect between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Yet some may see this and think to themselves, "If the act of begetting is really just the act of the intellect, which we know to be common to the three Divine Persons, then it does seem that the Son would likewise produce a Son in virtue of having this act in common with the Father." To which we respond that in order for the Son to beget a Son of His own, it is necessary that He possess His own numerically distinct act of intellection, since an operation performed by a single agent that already serves as the foundation for two correlative relations cannot also serve as the foundation between two new correlative relations. However, since we teach that everything the Father has, He has given to the Son in begetting Him, He likewise has the same one act of intellection and thus cannot produce a numerically distinct Son of Himself. Hence, when the mother's act of begetting serves as the foundation for the relations between her and her daughter, an entirely new and numerically distinct act of begetting is required if there is to exist a relation between that daughter and her own offspring. It would be impossible for the mother's act of begetting to serve as the foundation for both the relations between her and her daughter and also the relations between her daughter and her granddaughter. This is because the initial operation has already reached its terminus, and the production of another terminus would go beyond the nature of the operation. Thus, it is impossible for the Son's act of intellection to result in a numerically distinct Son of His own, for since the act of intellection He has from the Father has already reached its proper terminus in the Son, it cannot be used for the production of another Son. For this reason we say the Son does not beget, because to "beget" invokes the notion of relation by way of intellection, and the Son does not have this. Yet relation by way of intellection is still, properly speaking, a relation and not an operation. Thus, despite saying "the Son does not beget," we still affirm He has all the same operations as the Father because, though He lacks the relation by way of intellection, He lacks not the intellection itself which He has in common with the Father.

3. ***"If the Father and the Son share numerically the same knowledge then all the propositions known by the Father are likewise known by the Son. Yet only the Father knows the proposition "I am the Father" and the Son does not. Therefore, it follows that the Father and the Son do not share numerically the same knowledge."***

To this we can answer by conceding the major premise and denying the minor, namely that only the Father knows the proposition "I am the Father" and the Son does not. This is because the nature of indexicals, such as "I", whose meanings vary depends on the context. Thus, we can actually say the Son knows the proposition "I am the Father" so long as the "I" is understood to be referring to the Father. Hence, when one a Ethiopian approaches a Spainard saying "Do you know that I am Ethiopian", the Spainard can say "yes I do know that" not because the Spainard thinks he is himself Ethiopian but because he understood the "I" in the proposition "I am Ethiopian" referred to the Ethiopian. The Spainard might even reply with "Yes I do know that you are Ethiopian". Despite the propositions being semantically different with respect to ones usage of "I" and "you" the information contained in both by which we determine their truth value is identical. Thus, in a like manner the Son and the Father both know "I am the Father" to be true in so far as "I" refers to the Father.